

NEWS UPDATE

***North Dakota's Pomeroy Champions
Chiropractic Initiative in Medicare, Plays
Key Legislative Role***



Rep. Earl Pomeroy and Sen. Kent Conrad meet with ACA officials
Rick Miller (far left) and Jon Hymes (far right)

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WASHINGTON, D.C. -- According to officials of the American Chiropractic Association (ACA), Representative Earl Pomeroy, North Dakota's Member of the U.S. House, played a key role in helping advance a top-priority federal legislative issue for the ACA and chiropractic profession, during recent action by the Senate Finance Committee to pass Medicare reform legislation.

On June 12, 2003, the Senate Finance Committee approved bi-partisan legislation overhauling the federal Medicare program and creating a new prescription drug benefit for seniors. As part of that legislation (*Senate Bill S.1, 108th Congress*), the Senate

Finance Committee included a 3-year pilot program to be conducted in six sites across the nation that would allow doctors of chiropractic to furnish and be reimbursed for any covered Medicare benefits they are licensed to provide under state law. The Senate Finance Committee agreed to include the “full scope” chiropractic provision in their version of Medicare reform legislation (*S.1*) despite opposition from Senate Majority Leader Dr. Bill Frist, MD, and strong opposition to the proposal by lobbyists representing the physical therapy profession.

Pomeroy, a former State Insurance Commissioner for North Dakota and acknowledged expert regarding insurance and reimbursement issues, helped ensure inclusion of the chiropractic provision by joining forces with North Dakota Senator Kent Conrad a member of the Senate Finance Committee. Pomeroy organized legislative strategy sessions with Conrad and ACA representatives that helped build and maintain strong support for the chiropractic provision on behalf of Senate Democrats serving on the Senate panel. This strong base of support helped ensure that Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley (*R-Iowa*), original author and strongest proponent of the pro-chiropractic pilot program, would have sufficient votes to defeat any amendment that threatened to derail the provision. Senate Majority Leader Dr. Frist, a member of the Committee, drafted and circulated two amendments to kill the pro-chiropractic provision – however he declined to formally offer either amendment when the committee voted on the Medicare bill.

The strong showing of support for the provision by key Republican Members of the committee, coupled with the Democrat support marshaled by Pomeroy and others, clearly succeeded in dissuading Dr. Frist from offering his “killer” amendments. The Finance Committee approved bill is now under consideration by the full U.S. Senate, and ACA officials expect approval of the measure by that body within a matter of days. The Senate approved Medicare bill will then be “melded” together with a similar bill to be voted on by the House of Representatives in the near future. At present, a companion chiropractic provision does not exist in the House Medicare reform legislation under development. With the continued efforts of Representative Pomeroy and others, the ACA hopes to include a companion provision when the House bill is voted on by the House or to secure an agreement that the House will accept the Senate chiropractic proposal in the final version of the bill to be approved by Congress as a whole.

For more information about the status of this issue and to learn more about Representative Pomeroy’s helpful role, please contact the ACA Department of Government Relations at (703) 276-8800.

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